

Document made available under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT)

International application number: PCT/IL05/001282

International filing date: 01 December 2005 (01.12.2005)

Document type: Certified copy of priority document

Document details: Country/Office: IL
Number: 165585
Filing date: 06 December 2004 (06.12.2004)

Date of receipt at the International Bureau: 11 January 2006 (11.01.2006)

Remark: Priority document submitted or transmitted to the International Bureau in compliance with Rule 17.1(a) or (b)



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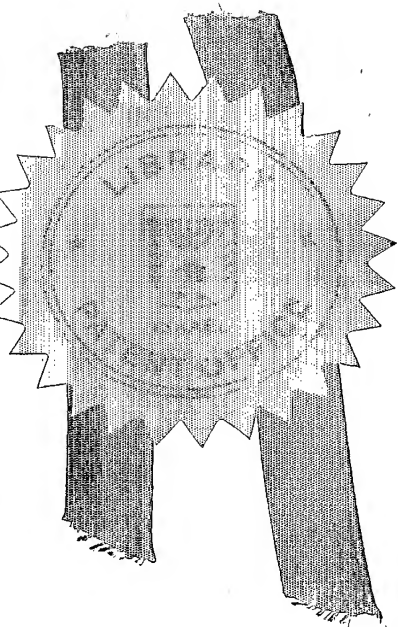
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בקשה לפטנט
Application for Patent

מספר: 165585 Number
תאריך: 06-12-2004 Date הוקדם / נדחה Ante / Post-dated

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רשת תקשורת רחבת פס בעלת אפשרות לאגירת מדיה

Broadband communication network provided with media
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רשת תקשורת רחבת פס בעלת אפשרות לאגירת מדיה
**Broadband communication network provided with media
storage**

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א.סי.איי טלקום בע"מ

ECIP/A039/IL

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention generally relates to distributed
5 systems and, more particularly, to a method and apparatus
for allowing communication in access networks along
subscribers' lines.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

10 At the present, Digital Subscriber Line (DSL)
service is offered by telecommunication service providers
mainly for the application of broadband Internet access.
The service utilizes the copper wires originally deployed
for telephony services, to connect customer premises
15 (CPE) DSL modems, and a central office Digital Subscriber
Line Access Multiplexer (DSLAM). In many modern
applications the DSLAM functionality is distributed to
remote terminals aggregated by an aggregation device
located in a centralized location. In the alternative,
20 such functionalities are carried in Passive Optical
networks ("PON") by an Optical Line Termination ("OLT")
that communicates with Optical Network Units ("ONUs") or
Optical Network Terminations ("ONTs"). Therefore the
term "DSLAM" as will be used herein should be understood
25 to encompass any such device which is operative to
receive traffic from the network side at a first
bandwidth and convey traffic towards the subscribers
wherein the traffic that can be conveyed to the different
subscribers has an aggregate second bandwidth, and
30 wherein the second bandwidth is substantially higher than
the first bandwidth. Therefore, devices characterized by
having current DSLAM architecture, as well as OLT devices
and also a plurality of remote terminals and their
respective aggregation devices, as a single virtual unit,

should all be understood to be encompassed under the term DSLAM as will be used hereinafter.

Recent advances in modulation technologies allow higher rates of transport over DSL lines. Further, competition on telecommunication services drives local service providers to deploy more services such as video over IP (IP-TV) and voice over IP (VoIP) over the same DSL infrastructure.

The IP-TV service is offered to consist of various capabilities in order to successfully compete with traditional analog cable, digital cable, and digital satellite broadcast. These capabilities include features such as basic broadcast channels; premium broadcast channels; video on demand ("VoD"), Personal Video Recording ("PVR"), etc.

VoD solutions are currently delivered via special equipment used for storing the content that can be provided on demand to the users. Originally, VoD servers were developed as a centralized disk array which holds all the content and is able to distribute to all VoD users simultaneously over a high bandwidth connection, typically available over cable (CATV) networks. Direct Unicast connections between users and the VoD server demand high bandwidth allocation in the broadband networks. To lower this bandwidth demand, distributed VoD solutions, located closer to the users, are offered.

PVR is a video storage application, mostly provided as an integrated feature in the users set top box ("STB"). Few solutions exist that offer PVR as a network service using similar technologies to VoD.

Most digital TV services are offered such that all streams are multicast at the network headend to a single, high bandwidth stream. When a user selects a specific broadcast channel, one element in the network is used to

separate this channel from the multicast stream and transmit it to the user over a limited bandwidth connection. In IP-TV over DSL applications, the DSLAM is typically used for that purpose, hence the need to
5 optimize the network bandwidth requirements from the DSLAM to the broadband network.

An inherent problem with channel change of digital video streams is the average delay created in the video decoder (typically located at the user premises), until a
10 video signal is sent to the television set. To overcome this limitation, several solutions were proposed.

One solution is described in US 6804825, which discloses a method of operating a video on demand system by which a user-requested video program is presented at
15 the user's terminal, after being transmitted over a first transmission channel. In response to a user action, the transmission is interrupted and in response to a subsequent action, the transmission is resumed over a second transmission channel different than the first,
20 while automatically retuning the client terminal to present the resumed transmission over the viewing channel.

US 6748481 describes an appliance for handling streaming (video/audio) information received via Internet
25 by writing blocks in circular buffer. The information appliance includes a buffer, a writer module which receives blocks of streaming information and writes the blocks to the buffer at a write position, and a reader module which selectively reads the blocks from the buffer
30 at a read position. An adjustment mechanism adjusts the relative positions of the read and write position.

In summary, different applications require the use of video storage technologies close to the edge of the network, and in proximity to the DSLAM.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In order to solve the above described problems, one of the objects of the present invention is provide a solution to incorporate the video storage sub-system, supporting the VOD, network PVR, and fast channel change applications to be integrated with the DSLAM framework. The DSLAM is enhanced to include local prioritization mechanism as specified by the applications utilizing the video storage device.

According to a first aspect of the present invention there is provided a DSLAM comprising:

a network side interface adapted to receive a plurality of communication signals conveyed along a broadband network;

a storage means adapted to receive at least some of the plurality of communication signals, associate a prioritizing selection criterion with the communication signals received thereat and store their content in accordance with the associated priority;

multiplexing means operative to retrieve the content stored in the storage means and multiplex the content thus received with run time data received at the network side interface, into a multiplexed product, wherein this step of multiplexing is carried while ensuring a minimum pre-defined quality of service for the multiplexed product;

a subscribers' output interface adapted to receive the multiplexed product from the multiplexing means and forward it along a communication line extending towards a subscriber; and

a subscribers' input interface adapted to receive information generated by the subscribers.

In accordance with a preferred embodiment of the invention, the retrieval of content stored in the storage means is carried in response to information (e.g. command) received from one or more of the subscribers.

5 According to an embodiment of the invention, the pre-defined quality of service is determined based on a type of application by which the content of the multiplexed product is characterized.

10 By yet another embodiment of the invention, the priority associated with the communication signals is based on a type of application by which the contents of the communication signals will be utilized.

15 Preferably, the communication signals are selected from the group consisting of: data signals, video signals, unicast video signals, multicast video signals, facsimile signals, audio signals, voice signals and any combination thereof.

20 In accordance with yet another embodiment, the subscriber's output interface is further adapted to forward the multiplexed product in accordance with a bandwidth associated with the subscriber's communication line.

25 By still another embodiment of the invention, the subscriber's output interface is further adapted to forward the multiplexed product in accordance with priorities associated with the components comprising the multiplexed product. In addition or in the alternative, the subscriber's output interface is further adapted to forward said multiplexed product in accordance with a
30 priority assigned by said multiplexing means to the multiplexed product.

 According to another preferred embodiment of the invention, implementing personal video recording (such as PVR or DVR) in the DSLAM is done by storing part or

all of multicast broadcast video streams based on the subscriber's commands.

5 In accordance with yet another embodiment of the invention, the multiplexed product is a video stream adapted to be shared by a plurality of subscribers.

By still another embodiment of the invention, the storage means is further operative to allocate storage space to store certain amount of content for each of the communication signals that are stored.

10 Preferably, the multiplexing means is further adapted to classify the multiplexed product in accordance with pre-defined criteria and assign the priority for the multiplexed product in accordance with that classification. More preferably, the priority is assigned
15 so as to assure a minimum quality of service required for the type of classification associated with the multiplexed product. In addition or in the alternative, some or all of the bandwidth limitations existing along the communication line that extends towards the
20 subscriber, effect the priority assigned to the multiplexed product.

In accordance with yet another embodiment, the DSLAM further comprises a storage adapted to hold a plurality of multicast video signals and identify at least one of
25 the multicast video signals that is in conformity with information generated by a subscriber (e.g. a command initiated by a subscriber using a remote control to convey that command via his/her set top box towards the subscribers' input interface. Such a command can be for
30 example a change in the channel being viewed).

In addition or in the alternative, the DSLAM is further adapted to unicast the at least one of the video signals identified, to the subscriber generating the information.

According to yet another embodiment, the DSLAM of the invention is further adapted to associate one or more of the video signals stored at the storage means, with a subscriber, and forward the one or more video signals to the subscriber in response to a command received from the subscriber.

By yet another embodiment of the invention, the storage means are adapted to allocate a pre-defined storage space for storing incoming communication signals. Preferably, the allocation is made in accordance with the type of application by which the content of the incoming communication signals is characterized (e.g. the video streams). Still preferably, after having the allocated storage space filled, any further information that should be stored at that storage space, shall replace the oldest information stored at the allocated storage space. In other words, according to this embodiment content is stored in the allocated space for x units of time and thereafter, as in a FIFO mechanism, the oldest information will be replaced with the new information.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

A better understanding of the present invention is obtained when the following non-limiting detailed description is considered in conjunction with the following drawings in which:

FIG. 1 illustrates a schematic presentation of a prior art DSLAM and its incorporation in an access network;

FIG. 2 illustrates a schematic presentation of a DSLAM constructed according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 3A shows a schematic presentation of a prior art network while FIG. 3B shows a schematic presentation

of a network operative according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 4 is a flow chart diagram illustrating a method for establishing a communication session in response to user request for new video service, according to an embodiment of the present invention; and

FIG. 5 shows an example of hierarchical level scheme for managing storage of video streams in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Reference will now be made in detail to an implementation consistent with some embodiments of the present invention as illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

Fig. 1 presents a schematic diagram of a prior art DSLAM 2 comprising the following elements (in either centralized or distributed architecture):

Network interface 10 - used to connect DSLAM 2 to service provider network 12 (not shown in this Fig), allowing the exchange of digital signals with that network;

Switching fabric 4 - used to receive digital signals, have them multiplexed and concentrated by lowering the total bandwidth required for sending transmissions to the users. This means that not all bandwidth pre-allocated to the different users can indeed be provided to all of them, all the time.

DSL modems 6 - used to transport the concentrated high rate data over copper wires to the subscribers, and receive transmissions from them.

Let us revert now to Fig. 2, which describes a DSLAM constructed in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. In this DSLAM, storage 15 is provided, operative to support all media storage applications

required for the DSLAM switching and multiplexing sub-system 4. The actual storage sub-system 15 may be implemented as an internal or external part of the DSLAM. The storage sub-system of this example, is a digital media (for voice, video, data signals) storage (DMS) server integrated with the DSLAM of the broadband transport system.

Through the network input interface 10, various inputs of media content such as voice streams, single video streams, multicast video streams, and data streams are received from the broadband transport network, while network output interface 10 is operative to multiplex media content from the DMS for transmission towards the network, for applications such as video file sharing among users.

The subscribers' side media output interface is operative to multiplex the media content stored in the DMS and sent to subscribers along with the real time data transmitted to the subscriber, along the same subscriber line. The subscribers' side media input interface is operative to receive media content from the subscribers and store it in the DMS.

Preferably, the storage sub-system is further provided with an internal bandwidth and storage broker controller setting bandwidth and storage space priorities to each of the different media storage streams.

Typically, a processor is used to control the overall operations of the DMS.

The DMS of the present example has a built in stream priority mechanism able to assign different priorities to different streams: various media streams stored in the DMS and real time streams sent between the network and the subscriber. Priority is set according to the specifics of each application. This prioritization

assures the appropriate quality of service of the stored media streams over the bandwidth limitations available over each subscriber line.

5 The DMS may be used as a buffer required for the implementation of fast digital TV channel surfing. In such application, the DMS buffers all multicast video streams and is able to uniquely search and send unicast streams immediately after the subscriber changes a channel with no load to the network interface or the
10 broadband network.

The DMS can also be used for the application of network PVR and stores only the content required by the subscriber and allowed by the service provider with no load to the network interface or the broadband network.
15 This allows the subscribers to have their personal media data stored at the DMS for later use, e.g. upon sending the DSLAM with appropriate command to retrieve their personal media stored and have it transmitted along the corresponding subscribers' lines.

20 The DMS may also be used for the application of VoD. Most modern VoD systems distribute mostly used titles to disk replicas located at the service provider premises. The DMS (or part of it) can be used for that purpose.

The DMS may further be used for the application of
25 voicemail. If the user uses the broadband access transport system for telephony applications, this feature will be provided with no load to the network interface or the broadband network.

The storage used in the DMS can be made out of the
30 combination of one or more storage technologies. For example, solid state (DRAM, Flash) and/or mechanical disk.

As demonstrated before, part of the capacity of the DSLAM's storage means may be reserved for media content associated with one or more of the subscribers.

5 Preferably, the storage means is further provided with storage formatting means, operative to allocate different storage sizes according to the media content and/or application to be stored. In addition or in the alternative, the allocation is done in accordance with a service provisioning agreement, pre-signed with the
10 respective subscribers.

Also, according to an embodiment of the invention, at least part of the capacity of the storage is allocated with subscribers (at least with some of them) so that for each of these subscribers, there is a defined and fixed
15 capacity guaranteed.

Furthermore, another option of handling storage at the DSLAM is, that at least some of the storage capacity is gained by utilizing distributed storage means integrated with the broadband modems that connect the
20 DSLAM with the subscriber, so that in other words, some of the overall DSLAM storage capacity is achieved through the use of memory chips installed on some or all of the modem cards installed at the DSLAM.

Preferably, the DSLAM further comprises backup
25 storage means, operative to backup at least part of the communication signals' content stored at the main storage means. More preferably, the backup storage is further provided with sorting means to determine the communications signals' content that will be stored at
30 the backup storage means in accordance with at least one pre-defined criterion associated with the media content and/or application, e.g. the content of which types applications will be stored. In addition or in the alternative, the sorting means to are operative in

accordance with a service agreement pre-signed with the respective subscribers.

When media storage for the applications described above is implemented close to the DSLAM, it is typically
5 located at the local network connected to the DSLAM network interface. As the DSLAM concentrates the streams, some of the data available on the network interface port may be blocked at the DSLAM by the switching fabric and aggregation. To achieve maximum performance, it is
10 required by the applications to set different quality of service (QoS) for each media stream and each application. This is not always possible due to technical limitations or service provider operational constraints. This problem will magnify when many users will demand multiple unicast
15 media storage services such as VoD, PVR, and fast channel change.

As demonstrated in Fig. 2, the media storage input and output streams are directly connected to the DSLAM switching and aggregation functions without any
20 limitation on bandwidth. Using this architecture, the entire bandwidth load associated with the media storage streams towards the users is relieved from the DSLAM network interface and the network connected to it thereafter.

25 For example, a network PVR can be implemented by connecting the multicast video streams (typically broadcast TV) to the media storage based on user commands. In this implementation, the only unicast connections are set between the user set top box and the
30 DSLAM, hence no increase in bandwidth demands from the network would be required.

Further, the DSLAM can prioritize the media streams utilization of the bandwidth available from the DSLAM to

the user premises, thus providing guaranteed quality of service.

Let us turn now to Fig. 3A which shows a typical prior art network, 50, operative to provide to its end users either multicasting type of services or VoD type of services (where PVR application is considered to be a VoD type of service). The way this network operates, is, by transmitting to the headend the content that should be provided under these two types of services, in response to the end users (70) requirements, where it is stored in video server 55. From this video server, the headend transmits the requested content towards the access network. The VoD type content delivery can be implemented by a direct unicast connection between the video server 55 at the headend and the CPE 70. Alternatively, to handle large number of subscribers and content, a local replica of the video server 55 is installed in the vicinity of the access network. This replica, consist of a dynamic sub-set of the content stored in the video server 55 is stored at video server 60. From this server the transmissions will be forwarded per users' demands via DSLAM 65 to end users 70. However, a problem arises as the demand for PVR type of service is growing fast. Suppose 50% of the end users use the PVR service. This means that at any given moment each of the 50% of the users may get a different transmission than the others. Consequently, even if all the users were to watch, say, the very same film, still, the bandwidth required to fulfill these demands will be extremely high as the various transmissions along the path extending between video servers 55 and 60 will typically be unicast type of transmissions, thus resulting in overloading the network.

The embodiment of the present invention described in Fig. 3B, provides a solution to this problem. By this

solution all transmissions will be multicasted to an access video server incorporated with or located at the vicinity of DSLAM 85. The video server/DSLAM will have adequate storage capacity as explained hereinbefore, and the users' requirements will be met by transmitting stored information to users 90.

This way the problem of overloading the path extending from the headend to the DSLAM while using unicast type of transmissions may be eliminated.

Fig. 4 presents a flow chart exemplifying a method according to an embodiment of the present invention, whereby an example of responding to a user's request for a new video service, is given. The user makes a request (e.g. by sending a command from his/her remote control via his/her set top box) for a new service such view a new live broadcast TV channel, use PVR to record and/or play a unicast or multicast channel, or request for VoD (step 100). A separate user management system checks if there is sufficient bandwidth allocated for that user so that the request can be fulfilled (110) and if not, rejects the request (120). If the bandwidth available is sufficient, then the system checks whether this request can be fulfilled by utilizing a TV broadcast (e.g. a channel that is currently broadcasted) (130). If in the affirmative, the DSLAM is requested to set a high priority connection between the user and the multicast stream reaching the DSLAM, and the user may watch the channel of his/her choice (140). Next, the system checks if the user requires using a network PVR ("nPVR") (step 150). An example for such a request could simply be when the user presses the "pause" button on his remote control, which means that the user would like to continue watching the same broadcast channel but with a delay. In this case, the picture will be frozen at the user's TV

set, while the multicast stream will be connected the nPVR input (160). Thereafter, a virtual high priority connection is set between the end user and the nPVR output stream at the DSLAM, and the content that is broadcasted to other viewers is stored at the DSLAM's buffer. Once the user request to resume the display, he will receive the broadcast from the DSLAM's buffer, while that buffer still continue to store the incoming mulicasted signal. Once the user causes the buffer to become empty (e.g. by skipping commercials, using fast forward functionality, etc.) the buffer capacity is available for use for another user. In this example, if the request is not for nPVR, it is assumed to be a request for VoD, and the system checks whether the requested content is available on the local replica of the VoD server (170). If in the affirmative, a direct high priority, unicast connection is set between the user and the VoD server, and the requested content is forwarded to the user (180). If not, the requested content is searched and retrieved at another VoD server located in the network, and a network connection is established between the storage means in which the requested content is stored on the local VoD server (190), and upon receiving the requested content at the local VoD, step 180 is carried to allow transmission of the requested content to the user.

Fig. 5 presents an example of a management scheme in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. By this example of a possible quality of service management, the management system checks whether the user storage is partially or completely empty (200). In case the storage is full, step 200 shall be repeated after a certain period of time. If the user storage is at least partially empty, the system checks whether a high

priority video stream data is available (210). Such high priority video data can be related to multicast broadcast video, or unicast stream from the VoD or nPVR storage. If there is such data available, some or all of the data is sent to the user's storage (step 220), and step 200, where the occupancy of the storage is checked, is repeated (either immediately or after a certain period of time). If no high priority video stream data is available, the management system checks if there is low priority video stream data available (230). Such low priority video data can be related to picture-in-picture presentation or unicast streams associated with fast channel change. If there is such data available, some or all of the data is sent to the user's storage (step 240), and step 200, is repeated (either immediately or after a certain period of time). If also no low priority video stream data is available, the management system checks if there is Internet data available (250). If such data is available, some or all of the data is sent to the user's buffer (storageuffer or not, step 200 will be repeated either immediately or after a certain period of time.

It is appreciated that various features of the invention which are, for clarity, described in the contexts of separate embodiments may also be provided in combination in a single embodiment. Conversely, various features of the invention which are, for brevity, described in the context of a single embodiment may also be provided separately or in any suitable sub-combination.

It will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that the present invention is not limited by what has been particularly shown and described herein above. Rather the scope of the invention is defined by the claims that follow:

CLAIMS

1. A Digital Subscriber Line Access Multiplexer (DSLAM) comprising:

5 a network side interface adapted to receive a plurality of communication signals conveyed along a broadband network;

0 a storage means adapted to receive at least some of said plurality of communication signals, associate a prioritizing selection criterion with the communication signals received thereat, and store their content in accordance with the associated priority;

5 multiplexing means operative to retrieve content stored in said storage means and multiplex the content thus received with run time data received at said network side interface into a multiplexed product, wherein said operation is carried while ensuring a minimum pre-defined quality of service for the multiplexed product;

0 a subscribers' output interface adapted to receive said multiplexed product from the multiplexing means and forward it along a communication line extending towards a subscriber; and

5 a subscribers' input interface adapted to receive information generated by the subscribers.

2. A DSLAM according to claim 1, wherein said retrieval of content stored in said storage means is carried in response to information received from one or more of the subscribers.

3. A DSLAM according to claim 1 or 2, wherein said pre-defined quality of service is determined based on a type of application by which the content of said multiplexed product is characterized.

4. A DSLAM according to any one of claims 1 to 3,
wherein the prioritized selection criterion associated
with said communication signals is based on a type of
application by which the contents of said communication
signals would be utilized.

5. A DSLAM according to any one of the preceding claims,
wherein said communication signals are selected from the
group consisting of: data signals, video signals,
facsimile signal, unicast video signals, multicast video
signals, audio signals, voice signals and any combination
thereof.

6. A DSLAM according to any one of the preceding
claims, wherein said subscriber's output interface is
further adapted to forward said multiplexed product in
accordance with a bandwidth associated with said
subscriber's communication line.

7. A DSLAM according to any one of the preceding
claims, wherein said subscriber's output interface is
further adapted to forward said multiplexed product in
accordance with prioritized selection criteria associated
with the components comprising the multiplexed product.

8. A DSLAM according to any one of claims 1 to 6,
wherein said subscriber's output interface is further
adapted to forward said multiplexed product in accordance
with a priority assigned by said multiplexing means to
the multiplexed product.

9. A DSLAM according to any one of the claims 1 to 8,
wherein application of a personal video recording is

implemented by storing at said storage means part or all of multicast video streams, based on subscribers' commands.

5 10. A DSLAM according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein said multiplexed product is a video stream adapted to be shared by a plurality of subscribers.

10 11. A DSLAM according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein said storage means is further operative to allocate storage space to store the content of each of the communication signals that are stored.

15 12. A DSLAM according to claim 8, wherein said multiplexing means is further adapted to classify said multiplexed product in accordance with pre-defined criteria and assign priority to said multiplexed product in accordance with that classification.

20 13. A DSLAM according to claim 11, wherein said priority is assigned so as to assure a minimum quality of service required for the type of classification associated with said multiplexed product.

25 14. A DSLAM according to claim 12, wherein at least some of the bandwidth limitations existing along the communication line extending towards the subscriber, effect the priority assigned to the multiplexed product.

30 16. A DSLAM according to claim 14, further comprising a storage adapted to hold a plurality of multicast video signals and identify at least one of said multicast video signals that is in conformity with information generated

by a subscriber and received at said subscribers' input interface.

17. A DSLAM according to claim 15, further adapted to
5 unicast said at least one of said video signals identified, to the subscriber generating the information.

18. A DSLAM according to claim 15 or 16, wherein the
information generated by the subscriber comprises a
10 change in the channel being viewed.

19. A DSLAM according to claim 3, wherein said storage
means are adapted to allocate a pre-defined storage space
for storing incoming communication signals.

15
20. A DSLAM according to claim 19, wherein said
allocation is made in accordance with the type of
application by which the content of said incoming
communication signals is characterized.

20
21. A DSLAM according to claim 19 or 20, wherein after
having said allocated storage space filled, any further
information to be stored at said storage space, shall
replace the oldest information stored at said allocated
25 storage space.

22. A DSLAM according to claim 14, wherein said plurality
of communication signals conveyed along a broadband
network comprises at least a voice signal directed to a
30 subscriber, and wherein said storage means is adapted to
store said voice signal.

23. A DSLAM according to claim 18, adapted to forward to the subscriber said stored voice signal in response to information received from said subscriber.

24. A DSLAM according to any one of the preceding claims, further adapted to associate one or more of the video signals stored at said storage means, with a subscriber, and forward said one or more video signals to the subscriber in response to a command received from the subscriber.

25. A DSLAM according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the information received from the subscriber comprises media content and said media content is stored thereat.

26. A DSLAM according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein said storage means is a member of the group consisting of solid-state storage, a mechanical storage and a combination thereof.

27. A DSLAM according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein part of the capacity of said storage means is reserved for media content associated with one or more of the subscribers.

28. A DSLAM according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein said storage means is further provided with storage formatting means, operative to allocate different storage sizes out of said storage means in accordance with the media content and/or application to be stored.

29. A DSLAM according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein at least part of the capacity of said storage

means is allocated so that to each of the subscribers associated with said DSLAM there is a defined and fixed capacity reserved.

5 30. A DSLAM according to claim 1, wherein any part of said storage means is adapted to be used by any of the subscribers associated with said DSLAM.

10 31. A DSLAM according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein said storage means is further provided with storage formatting means, operative to allocate different storage sizes in accordance with the application to be stored and a service provisioning agreement pre-signed with the respective subscribers.

15 32. A DSLAM according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein at least part of said storage means is divided and each of its divided parts is associated with a subscriber so as to enable storage of information per
20 that subscriber requirements and/or commands.

33. A DSLAM according to claim 31, where at least one of said divided parts is integrated with a broadband modem connecting said DSLAM with a subscriber.

25 34. A DSLAM according to any one of the preceding claims, further comprising backup storage means, operative to provide a backup for at least part of the communication signals' content stored at said storage means.

30 35. A DSLAM according to claim 33, wherein said backup storage is further provided with sorting means to determine the communications signals' content that will be stored at said backup storage means in accordance with

at least one pre-defined criterion associated with the media content and/or application.

36. A DSLAM according to claim 33, wherein said backup storage is further provided with sorting means to determine the communications signals' content that will be stored at said backup storage means in accordance with a service agreement pre-signed with the respective subscribers.

37. A video broadcasting system adapted to provide TV broadcasting services and at least PVR services, which system comprises:

broadcasting means operative to multicast video signals to a plurality of DSLAMs, each comprising:

a network side interface adapted to receive a plurality of video signals from said broadcasting means;

a storage means adapted to receive at least some of said plurality of video signals, and store their content;

a subscribers' output interface adapted to receive video signals from said DSLAM and forward it along a communication line extending towards a subscriber; and

a subscribers' input interface adapted to receive information generated by the subscribers,

wherein said DSLAM is operative to start storing said multicasted video signals upon receiving a first command from said subscriber and convey the stored video signals to said subscriber upon receiving a second command from said subscriber.

38. A method for establishing a connection between a DSLAM and a subscriber to provide a video service to said subscriber, which method comprises:

- (i) receiving a request initiated by a user for a video service;
- (ii) determining whether a sufficient bandwidth has been allocated for said user to fulfill said request, and if not, rejecting said request;
- (iii) determining whether said request can be fulfilled by utilizing a channel broadcasted by a TV broadcasting service and if in the affirmative, setting at said DSLAM a high priority connection between said subscriber and a multicast stream reaching said DSLAM, and comprises said channel;
- (iv) if by said step (iii) it is determined that said request cannot be thus fulfilled, determining if the subscriber's request can be fulfilled by using a network PVR and if in the affirmative, storing the content of said multicasted stream at a storage comprised in said DSLAM, establishing a virtual high priority between said DSLAM and said subscriber, and upon receiving a command from said subscriber to provide said video service, transmitting stored video signals while continuing to store the incoming mulicasted signal at said storage;
- (v) if by said step (iv) it is determined that said request cannot be thus fulfilled, determining whether the requested content is available on local replica of a VoD server and if in the affirmative, setting a direct

high priority, unicast connection between said VoD server and said subscriber, and forwarding the requested content to said subscriber;

- 5 (vi) in case the requested content is not available on local replica of a VoD server, retrieving said requested content from another VoD server associated with a network with which said local VoD server is associated and transmitting said requested content to said subscriber.

39. A method of providing TV broadcasting services and at least PVR type of services, which method comprises:

15 broadcasting multicast video signals to a plurality of DSLAMs,

at at least one of said plurality of DSLAMs, receiving said multicast video signals and storing the content of at least some of said multicast video signals;

20 forwarding video signals to at least one of a plurality of subscribers associated with said at least one DSLAM;

25 wherein storing of said multicasted video signals is carried upon receiving a first command from said at least one subscriber and said stored video signals is forwarded upon receiving a second command from said subscriber.

30 40. A method for managing storage capacity at a DSLAM which comprises:

- (i) determining whether a storage associated with at least one subscriber is partially or completely empty;

(ii) if in the affirmative, determining whether high priority video stream data is available, and if such data available, storing some or all of said data at said storage;

(iii) determining whether said storage is still partially or completely empty after carrying out step (ii) and if in the affirmative, determining whether low priority video stream data is available, and if such data available, storing some or all of said data at said storage;

(iv) determining whether said storage is still partially or completely empty after carrying out step (iii) and if in the affirmative, determining whether there is Internet data available, and if such data available, storing some or all of said data at said storage; and

(v) repeating steps (i) to (iv) every pre-determined period of time.

For the Applicant,

By:



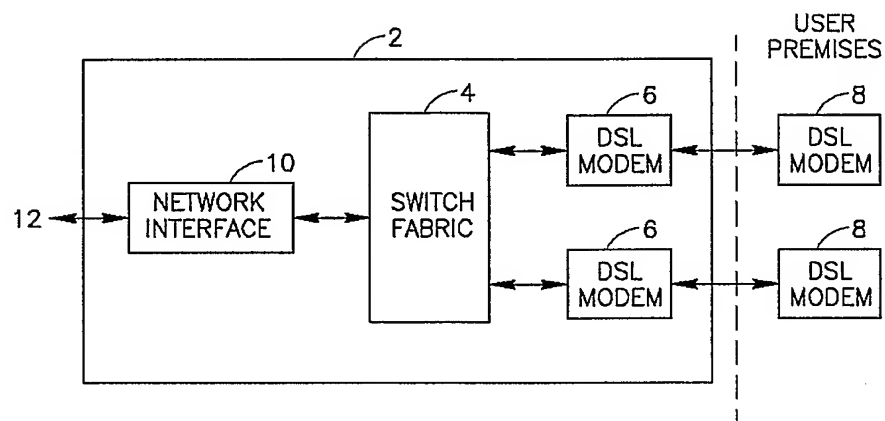


FIG. 1

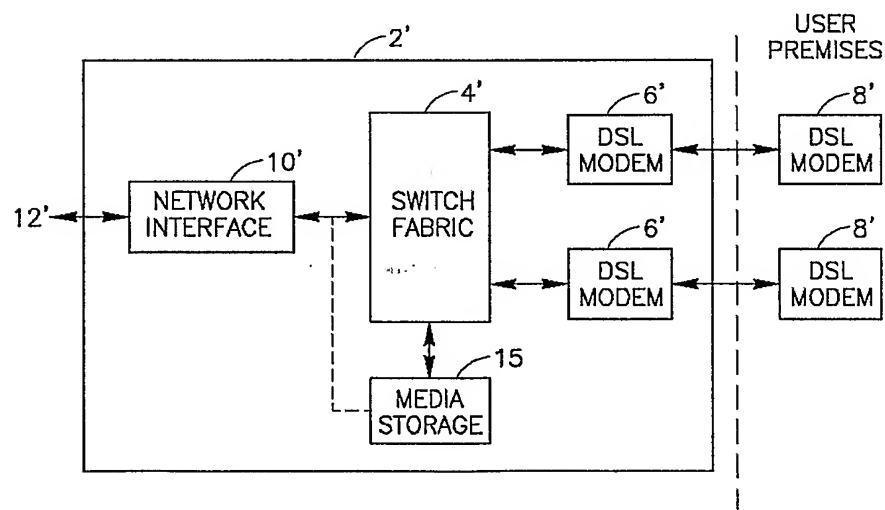


FIG. 2

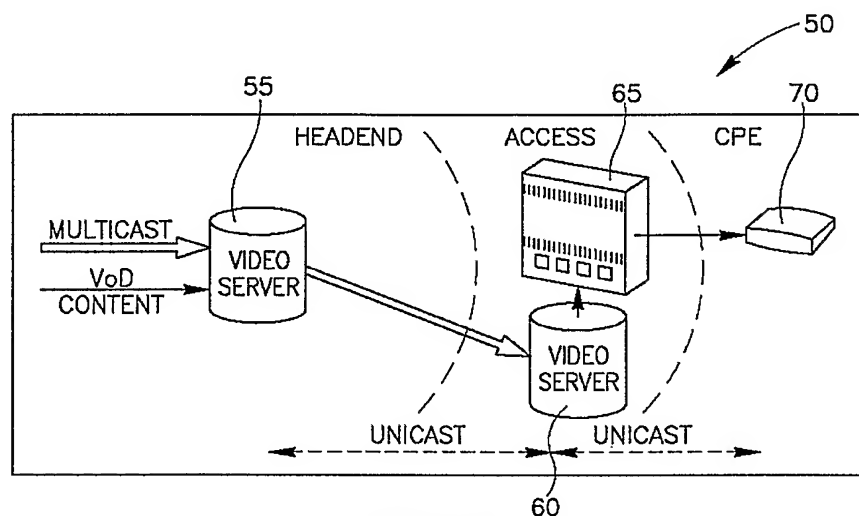


FIG. 3A

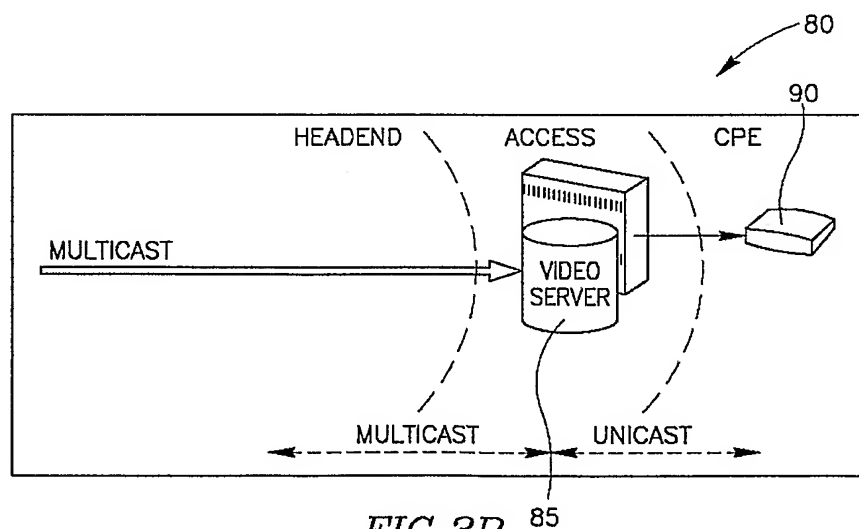


FIG. 3B

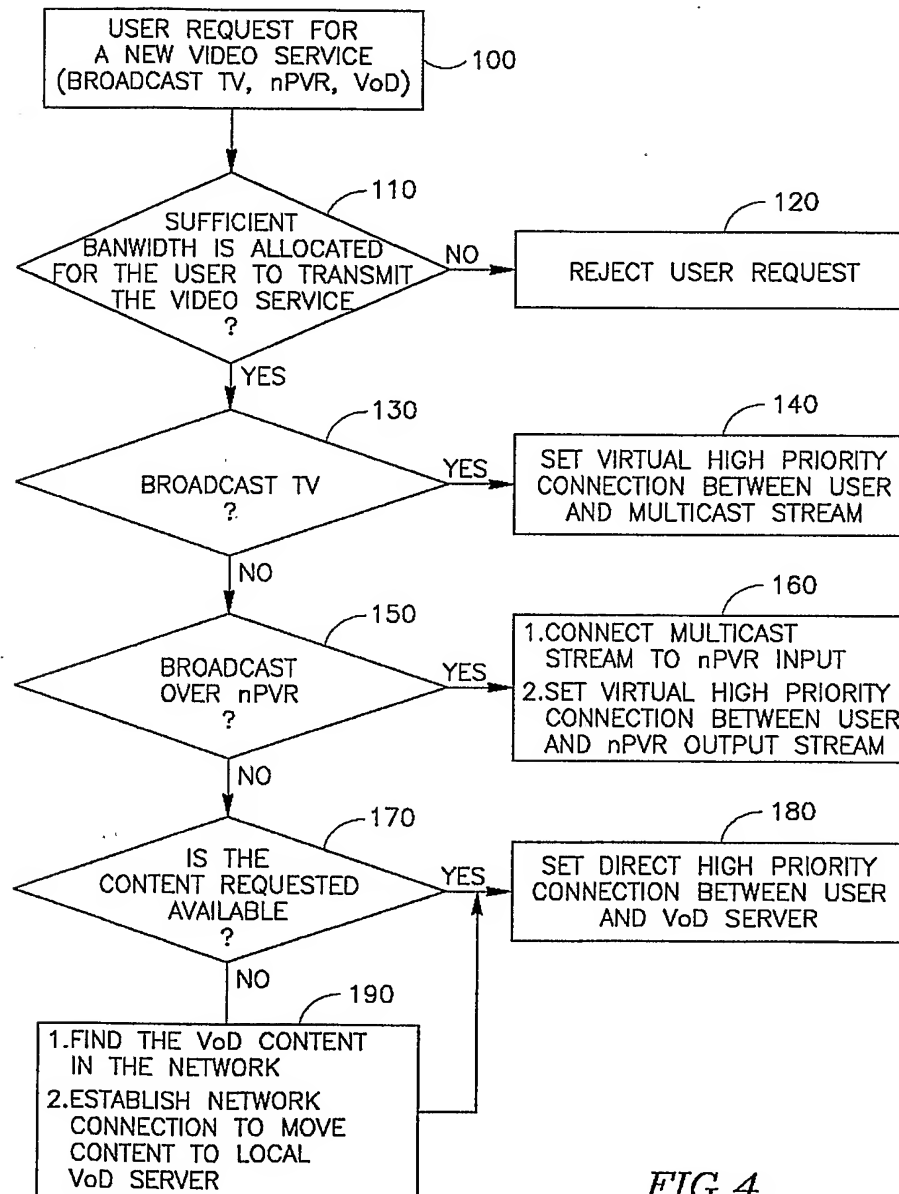


FIG.4

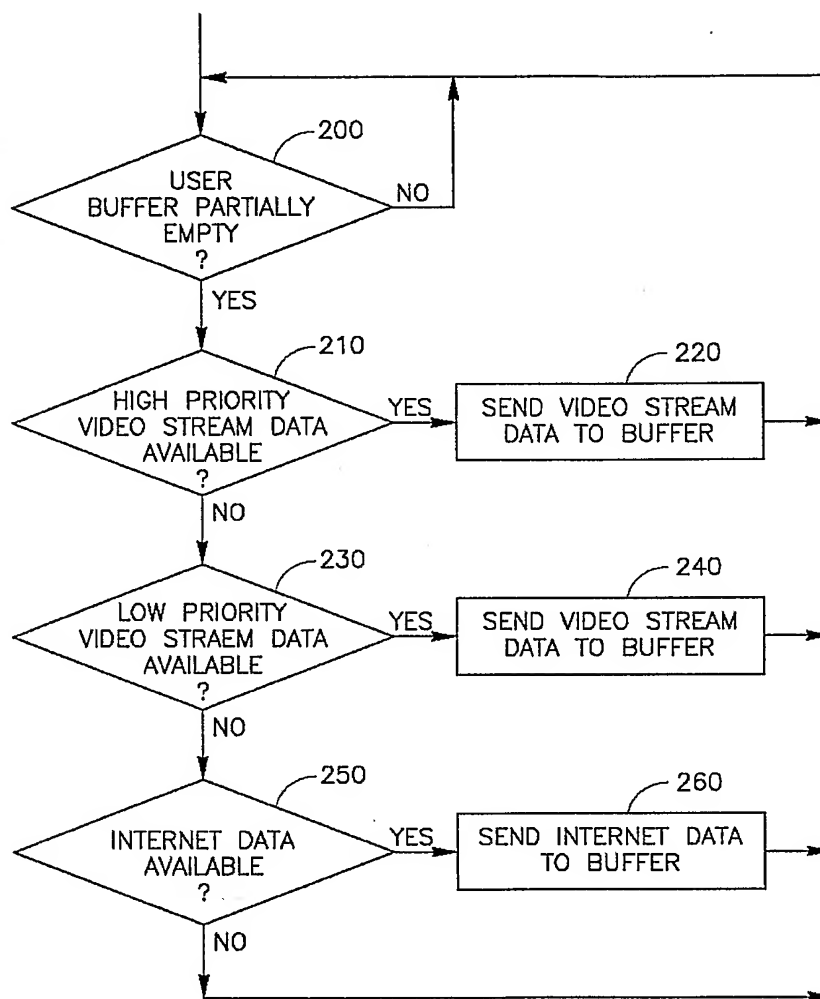


FIG.5